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Milwaukee

Ethnic Houses Tour



*The rich heritage of
immigrant architecture*

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The examples of ethnic architecture presented in this booklet were chosen for their outstanding architectural character and craftsmanship and were meant to give a general overview of Milwaukee's distinctive ethnic housing stock. In addition to these, many other fine examples can be found throughout the city.

Visitors to Milwaukee will find this guide a good introduction to some of Milwaukee's most interesting buildings, while local residents might be prompted to take a fresh look at some of the city's familiar and not so familiar landmarks. A brief word of caution is in order. Like all cities, Milwaukee has some neighborhoods that are in a state of social and economic transition. When viewing buildings in these areas, you are advised to exercise the same caution regarding personal safety that one should observe when entering any unfamiliar surroundings.

Unless otherwise indicated, the buildings featured are privately owned and not open to the public. We ask that the user of this booklet respect the privacy of the property owner.



Ethnic Houses Tour

*The rich heritage
of immigrant
architecture*

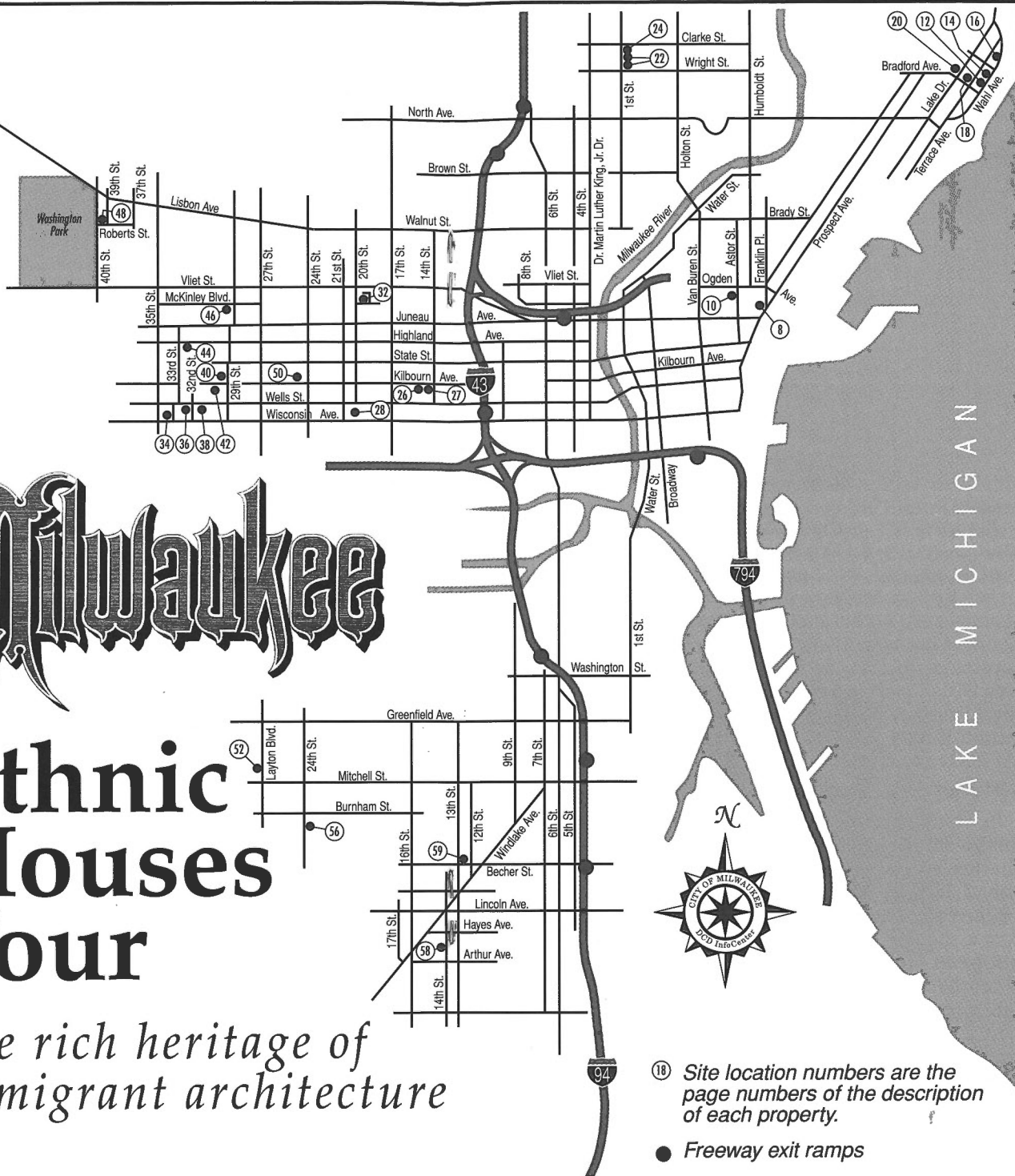
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Milwaukee

Ethnic Houses Tour

The rich heritage of immigrant architecture



⑮ Site location numbers are the page numbers of the description of each property.

● Freeway exit ramps

ETHNIC HOUSING

If you think that Milwaukee looks somehow different from other cities of its size, then you may have picked up on the fact that the city's distinctive building stock reflects the ethnicity of its residents, especially those of German and Polish heritage. This ethnicity, in the case of the Germans, is especially evident in the houses of the well-to-do, which were often patterned after those of the prosperous merchant and industrial classes in Germany. Either German-born themselves or the children of German immigrants, Milwaukee's residents kept abreast of the latest architectural trends in the old country through personal travel, publications, and the numerous cultural institutions which existed here to promote German culture. Although the Germans are often thought of as being excessively conservative, it is interesting that the houses which Milwaukee's prosperous Germans built in the 1890s and early years of this century were among the most avant-garde as well as the showiest of their time. They still stand out as distinctive today. This was most likely an expression of ethnic pride. Milwaukee's German-Americans were proud of the politically powerful unified Germany of their era as well as the reputation Germany had as an enlightened world center of artistic, literary and scientific achievement.

The city's architects played an important role in shaping the city. Some like Carl Barkhausen and Eugene Liebert had received their training in Germany, while others appear to have closely followed the European architectural trends of the era through publications. As Charles Ilsley reported in his discussion of architecture in Milwaukee in an article in *Architectural Record* magazine in 1905, "The work of the individual architect expresses his taste primarily, and not that of his clients." For example, it is known that client Gustav Trostel was "talked into" accepting the design of his lavish German Renaissance Revival style house on Terrace Ave. by his architect. The examples cited in this brochure represent a smattering of the city's best Teutonic residences. Certain motifs and materials became hallmarks of the German house type including shaped gables, stepped gables, bartizans or turrets, steep roofs, helmet domed towers, and lavish and boldly sculptural terra cotta figural ornament. Many of these features were derived from new buildings then being constructed in German cities such as Berlin and Dresden. The bold forms, top-heavy quality, and massive character of German Renaissance Revival houses contrast with the more delicate late American Queen Anne houses typical of the period.

Milwaukee's Polish residents, in contrast, were not, by and large, prosperous manufacturers or merchants like the Germans. They were mainly poor immigrants from the rural areas of Poland that were then under the domination of Austria or Germany. They worked primarily in the factories clustered along the Milwaukee River or in the Menomonee Valley and on the city's south side. Unlike other immigrant groups, the Poles here did not move into older, inner city neighborhoods, but preferred to establish their own new enclaves at the undeveloped edges of the city. In their neighborhoods a distinct housing type evolved which we know today as the Polish flat. The simple, functional, box-like frame cottages of the Poles were generally designed and erected by builder-contractors rather than by architects. They consisted of a living room, kitchen, and 2 or 3 bedrooms. As the family grew or extended family members needed shelter, the cottage was often raised up and a masonry basement, mostly above grade, was built under the house and used as a separate apartment. No direct correlation links this unique housing type to buildings in Europe; rather, the Polish flat appears to be a response to the narrow urban lots and great population density found in working class Milwaukee Polish neighborhoods. Literally hundreds of examples can be seen in Milwaukee south of Greenfield Ave. Unlike the Germans whose large mansions were often regarded as works of art and were seldom changed by their owners after they were built, the Poles were not adverse to altering their dwellings to incorporate newly fashionable building materials, such as asphalt or aluminum siding, or to change exterior features to reflect new architectural trends. A few surviving examples which retain most of their original exterior features intact, are described in this booklet, although it is actually probably more historically accurate to recognize that the Polish house was, in many ways, always a work in progress, being modified by successive generations as their tastes and housing aspirations changed.

The era of ethnic-influenced house design in Milwaukee was relatively brief, lasting only from the 1890s until World War I. Anti-German sentiment associated with World War I, a growing modernist movement, the influence of zoning and building regulations, and the assimilation of immigrant families into mainstream American culture all worked concurrently to homogenize tastes in architectural design and suppress direct European influences on Milwaukee's housing stock. Sadly, these same influences encouraged the destruction of many of Milwaukee's more flamboyant German style houses during the 1950s and 1960s when Victorian architecture was out of favor generally and the German style houses, in particular, were often taken to represent the worst

"bad taste" and decorative excess of the Victorian period. Fortunately, the public perception of the architecture of the Victorian era is now much more positive. The craftsmanship and decorative eccentricities of the surviving houses are now rightly appreciated and even celebrated as the products of an exciting and exuberant era in the city's history.

German houses like these from the 1890's inspired Milwaukee's German-Americans to build houses that reflected their ethnic heritage:



The Parkschänke in Dresden (1894-1895), Architect: W. Fichtner



Villa Stahn, Wannsee, (1895-1896), Architect: Otto Stahn
Courtesy of Milwaukee Public Library



The Third Army Corps Commander's residence, Berlin (c. Turn-of-the-Century),
Architect: H. Hausmann.

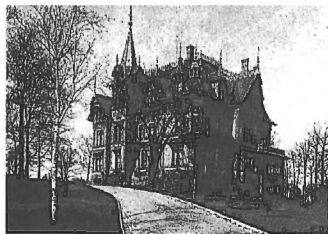
Courtesy of Milwaukee Public Library



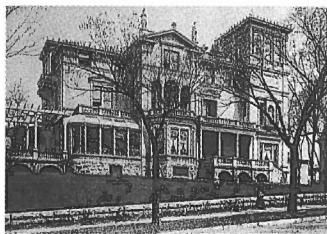
Franz Adolph Lange residence, Dresden (1896), Architect: Unknown

LOST EXAMPLES OF ETHNIC ARCHITECTURE

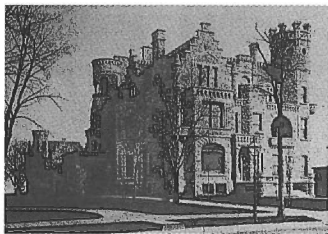
The following illustrations are intended to provide the tourgoer with a more complete picture of how prevalent ethnic influenced architecture once was in Milwaukee. Its period of popularity was relatively brief, lasting only about two decades, until a shift in taste toward modernism and the anti-German sentiment that accompanied the two world wars made these unique buildings suspect in the public's eye. Many people in the mid-20th century, in fact, regarded these ethnic buildings as aesthetic eyesores representing the worst examples of Victorian excess. In addition, as they became more anglicized, many German-Americans developed noticeably Anglophile tastes after World War I as they left their European-inspired mansions to move to more mainstream Tudor Revival and Colonial style houses. Ironically, although they were built to last the ages, the ethnic-looking buildings were often the first to be demolished in the 1950s and 1960s. With the renewed interest in historic architecture, public opinion has shifted back toward an appreciation of these unique, handcrafted buildings, although demolition and insensitive remodelings are still taking their toll on our dwindling stock of these fine structures.



Emil Schandelin House
2400 W. Wisconsin Ave.
Built 1887-1889. Razed 1927. ▲



Adolph Meinecke House
1203 N. Milwaukee St.
Built 1888. C. F. Ringer, builder.
Razed 1956. ▲



David M. Benjamin House
1570 N. Prospect Ave.
Architect: C. A. Gombert
Built 1889-1890. Razed 1963. ▲



Fred Kraus House
1671 N. Prospect Ave.
Architect: Crane and Barkhausen.
Built 1891-1892. Razed 1962. ♦

▲ Courtesy of Milwaukee County Historical Society
♦ Courtesy of Milwaukee Public Library



Ferdinand Schlesinger House
1444 N. Prospect Ave.
Architect: Crane and Barkhausen
Built 1892. Razed 1950's. ♦



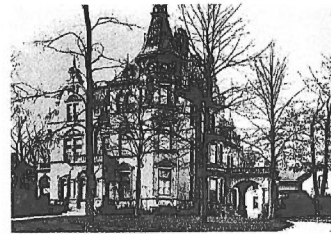
Herman Luedke House
965 N. 11th St.
Architect: Crane and Barkhausen
Built 1895. Razed 1992.



C. Henry Rische Flats
2523-2525 W. Kilbourn Ave.
Architect: Rische and Kiesslich.
Built 1898. Razed 1989.



Val Blatz, Jr. House.
1700 N. Prospect Ave.
Architect: Otto Strack.
Built 1903. Razed 1964. ♦



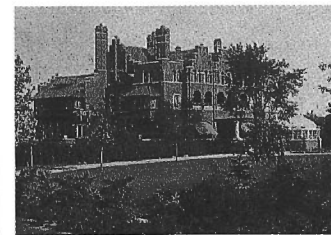
George Brumder House
1728 W. Wisconsin Ave.
Built in 1885 but remodeled into above form
for the Brumders in the 1890's.
Razed 1944. ▲



A. L. Kane Flats
1947 N. Prospect Ave.
Architect: Fernekes and Dolliver.
Built 1896. Razed 1963. ♦



2032 W. Juneau Ave.
Architect: Rische and Kiesslich.
Built 1897. Razed 1980's.



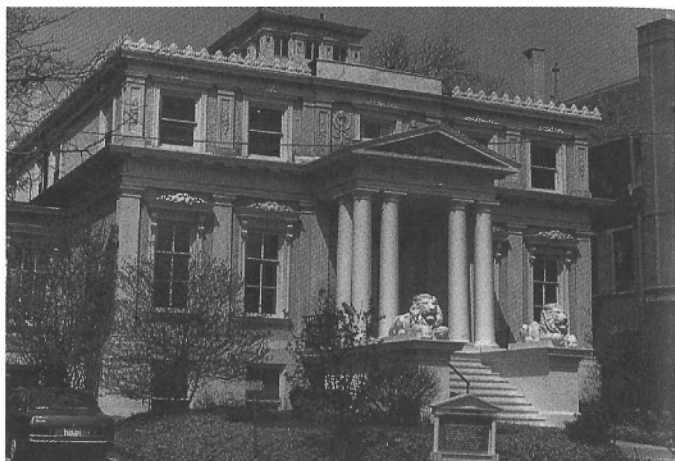
Albert O. Trostel House.
3200 N. Lake Dr.
Architect: E. R. Liebert.
Built 1910. Razed 1937. ▲

EAST SIDE HOUSES

Edward Diederichs House 1241 N. Franklin Place

Year built: c. 1855

Architect: Mygatt & Schmidtner

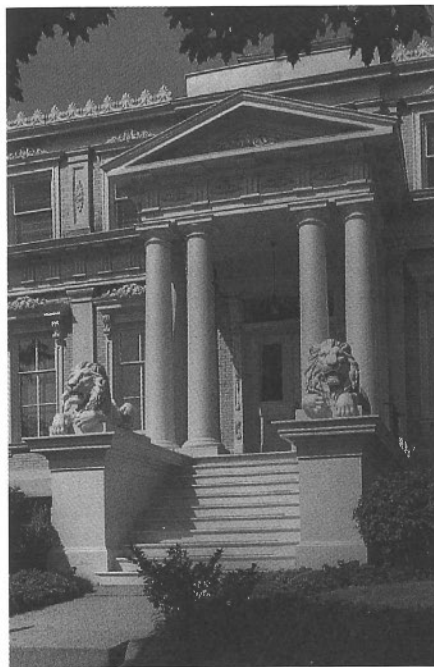


The mid-1980s replacement of the long-missing recumbent lions has restored the most notable architectural feature to what has long been known as the Lion House. German immigrant and entrepreneur Edward Diederichs moved to Milwaukee in 1849 and invested in numerous business schemes. He commissioned this house in the mid-1850s from local architects Mygatt & Schmidtner. Schmidtner's father was said to have been an architect for the Russian royal family, and Diederichs is said to have spent some time in Russia, so there might have been common interests between patron and designer.

Originally built as a single story structure on a raised basement, the house was patterned after the classically-inspired villas fashionable in central and eastern Europe in the early 19th century. Diederichs is said to have provided the architects with sketches of a European house he admired. The monumental portico, the broad flight of steps framed by plinths, the stone pilasters of the facade, the ornamental triglyph and metope frieze and the cupola are all elements one might have seen on Neoclassical style European villas of the 1820-50 period, and perhaps such a house symbolized to Diederichs the attainment of social status and culture.

With the onset of a serious national economic downturn in 1857, Diederichs' fortunes began to decline. To make matters worse, his fine new house suffered a disastrous fire in 1859, and he lost what remained of his fortune in his attempt to rebuild it. Although the house was rebuilt, Diederichs went bankrupt, and he left Milwaukee shortly thereafter. He is said to have died in a New York poorhouse.

The house was subsequently owned by furniture manufacturer Henry Mann and later by banker John Johnston. Johnston commissioned architect Howland Russel to add the second story in 1895 as well as to remodel the interior and enlarge the front porch. The original cupola was reinstalled on the new roof. The building remained a single family residence until it was converted to offices in the 1980s. The house is notable as the best surviving example of a Central European style Neoclassical raised villa in Milwaukee. It represents the direct copying of European architectural models by Milwaukee's pioneer immigrant architects and settlers as they carved out a life for themselves on the frontiers of a new world. The Diederichs house is part of the First Ward Triangle Local and National Register Historic District. ♦



John Barth House 1331 N. Astor Street

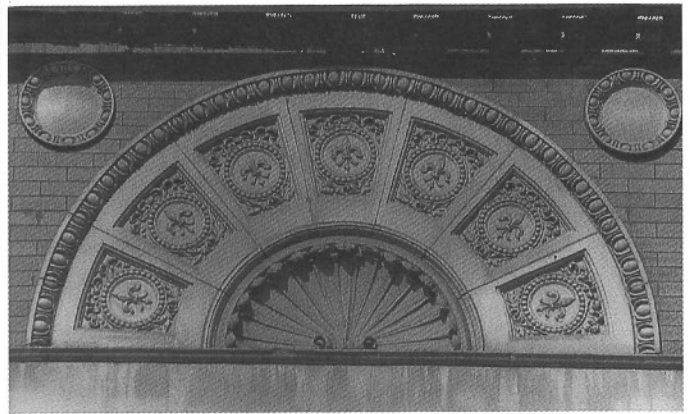
Year Built: 1895

Architect: W. D. Kimball



Seemingly out of place in the neighborhood called Yankee Hill, this German Renaissance Revival style mansion was built for John Barth, a child of German immigrant parents. Barth was born in Milwaukee and in 1872 began working for his brother-in-law Emil Schneider, who operated a wholesale wine and liquor business on S. 1st Street in Walker's Point. When Schneider retired ten years later, Barth took over the company, eventually renaming it after himself. At the pinnacle of his career, Barth left his modest south side residence to build a mansion in what had been an enclave of well-to-do Yankees and New Yorkers in Milwaukee's early decades. The aging, but still fashionable, neighborhood was at the fringe of the prestigious Prospect Avenue mansion district and must have represented a considerable increase in social status for the Barth family. Barth did not long enjoy his fine new house because he died suddenly in 1905 at the age of 51. Family members lived on in the house through 1920. The house later became a home for Catholic girls and is now a rooming house for students.

At the time of its construction, many prosperous German-Americans were erecting similar German Renaissance inspired mansions around the city. For their new houses, they favored the dramatic stepped gables,



extensive use of terra cotta trim and tan colored brick seen on this house. The delicacy of the ornament and flatness of the facade on the Barth house sets it apart from the other houses of this type, perhaps reflecting the non-German background of its architect, W. D. Kimball, who is better known for designing American Colonial Revival style houses. Most German Renaissance Revival style houses were designed by German-American architects. It is not known why Barth chose a Yankee to design his house, but it was the only house in this style Kimball ever designed. ♦



Frederick Weinhausen House

2543-45 N. Wahl Avenue

Year Built: 1901

Architect: Carl Barkhausen



Architect Carl Barkhausen specialized in designing houses like this one in the German Renaissance Revival style for wealthy German-American clients. Because he designed so many of these houses using the same basic floor plan and facade composition, he was always trying to find new ways to make the houses look different so that his rich clients would all feel their mansions were unique. For the Weinhausen house he chose to use an unusual patterned wall treatment alternating buff and tan colored brick. He also lavished bold sculptural decorations on the house including the terra-cotta date panel that ornaments the front and numerous other terra-cotta features, including several that incorporate human faces. The bold gables have shaped profiles accented with terra cotta winged dragons and the unusual mythical faces in the copings. Each front gable is further dramatized by an ornamental pinnacle turret with a foliated finial of terra cotta. It is the wealth of sculptural detail that makes the Weinhausen house unique, exemplifying the German love of fine craftsmanship and carved decoration.

Frederick Weinhausen was born in Hildesheim, Germany, and it has been suggested that the design of the house may have been inspired by the many historic Renaissance era

buildings still standing in Hildesheim's old town center. Weinhausen was one of the many ambitious German manufacturers who established large companies that remained prominent in Milwaukee well into the 20th century. In 1887 Weinhausen established the Milwaukee Bridge and Iron Co. with his brother Berthold. The firm built most of the bridges in downtown Milwaukee and was in business until the early 1990s when it closed. Weinhausen was also the president of the A. George Schulz Co., which had been founded by his brother George in 1878. That company manufactured paper and folding boxes and eventually became part of Hoerner-Waldorf-Champion International Corp.

After World War I Frederick Weinhausen, by then a millionaire, took extended visits to his native Hildesheim, where he died in 1930. The house's second owner, Dr. Stephen Sylvester Stack, lived in the house from 1919 until 1942. He was the medical superintendent of Sacred Heart Sanitarium on Layton Boulevard. The third owner converted the house into a duplex in 1959. The Weinhausen House is in the City of Milwaukee's North Point North Historic District. ♦



John F. Kern House 2569 N. Wahl Avenue

Year Built: 1899

Architect: Crane & Barkhausen



The Kern mansion was one of the first houses to be built on Wahl Avenue. It was described by the local press at the time of its completion as being of German Renaissance style. The house is, in fact, representative of the type of suburban villas then being built in the new suburbs of German cities, like Berlin, where architect Carl Barkhausen had studied. At the time of its construction, building houses in the architectural styles then most fashionable in Germany was all the rage among Milwaukee's wealthy German-American citizens. These people deliberately chose to emulate German styles rather than American ones, with the result that houses like the Kern residence are very distinctive and foreign looking, which is what makes them so interesting to look at today. The Kern house exhibits many of the German Renaissance Revival style's familiar elements, including the medieval looking corner bartizan or turret, massive, deep, arcaded entry porch and large front gable. The architects added some distinctive touches, such as the unusual reddish-orange brick and arcaded corbelling below the cornice. The typical German style gable is stepped in profile and trimmed with scrolls of red sandstone. The ornamental iron work, so popular with this style of house, was executed by master craftsman Cyril Colnik, who was one of the finest ironworkers of his time in the U.S. The house is said to be the first in Milwaukee built

with a type of central air conditioning system.

John F. Kern (1862-1926) was the son of German immigrant John Baptiste Adolph Kern. He assumed the management, and later presidency, of his father's Eagle Flouring Mills when the latter died in 1892. Kern also served as the vice-president of the Kern Realty Co. John and his wife, Jessie Goll, herself the daughter of German immigrants, built this house when they were in their late 30s and lived here

until they built a new house at 3233 N. Lake Drive in 1924. John F. Kern died in 1926, and Jessie died in 1933. The Kern House is in the City of Milwaukee's North Point North Historic District. ♦



Dr. James A. Bach House 2623 N. Wahl Avenue

Year Built: 1903

Architect: Carl Barkhausen

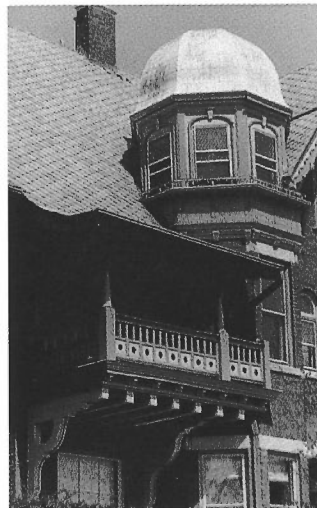


A touch of quaint old Germany can be seen in this picturesque house, one of the last truly Victorian style houses to be built in the North Point neighborhood. Its exuberant lines owe much to contemporary residential design in German cities like Hamburg and Dresden. The Bach House illustrates that Barkhausen was a versatile and creative architect. At the time of its construction, the house was described as being of "Austrian Renaissance" design. On the interior, the Bach House is a typical Victorian upper middle-class dwelling. The first floor contains an impressive hall, a spacious living room, and a generous dining room that have curly birch, mahogany, and quartersawn oak woodwork. The second floor contains four bedrooms and a library, while the third floor held the servants' rooms, a sewing room, and a billiard room. The house's exterior is a visual feast with lacelike wooden ornament trimming the curved roof of the porch, while more scalloped trim can be found on the upper story bargeboards. Abutting the domed tower is a unique second story airing porch with a decorative balustrade and brackets. The house's inclusion in the popular book about

colorful Victorian houses, *Daughters of Painted Ladies*, has given the building local celebrity status.

Dr. Bach was a Wisconsin native, born in 1860 to Luxembourg natives who had a farm in Washington County. After briefly teaching school, Bach attended the University of Michigan from which he obtained a medical degree in 1884. In the late 1880s he studied diseases of the eyes, ears, nose and throat in London, Berlin and Vienna, and it was probably this experience on the continent that influenced his choice of house design. Bach served for 25 years as the chair of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology at the Wisconsin College of Physicians and Surgeons, now part of the Medical College of Wisconsin.

Bach and his wife, Catherine, raised their family in their European style house, but like many of the affluent German-Americans who built German Renaissance style houses in the 1890s and early 1900s, the Bachs built a more up-to-date house in the 1920s and moved from their, then out-of-fashion, Victorian house. In Dr. Bach's case, though, he built his new house right next door at 2617 N. Wahl Avenue in 1923, and he and his wife lived here until about 1943. The Bach House is in the City of Milwaukee's North Point North Historic District. ♦



Turn-of-the-century European buildings provided Architect Barkhausen with such details as this hooded entry from the Villa Stollwerk in Cologne.

Courtesy of Milwaukee Public Library



Gustav Trostel House

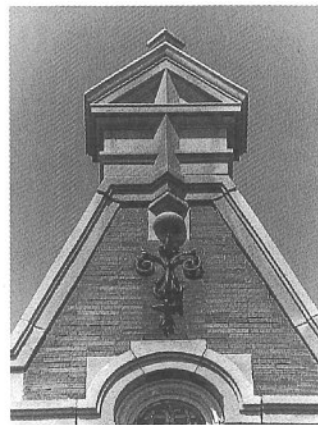
2611 N. Terrace Avenue

Year Built: 1900

Architect: Adolph Finkler &
Hans Liebert



The Gustav Trostel house is one of the most flamboyantly German style residences in Milwaukee. It looks like it would be more at home in the Black Forest than in an upper-class urban residential area in Milwaukee. Its unique character certainly distinguishes it from its more traditional-looking English and Colonial Revival style neighbors. Like something out of a picture book on Dresden, Germany, the Trostel home is beautifully embellished with cut limestone, copper, tile, stained glass, terra cotta, and the ornate iron work of famous craftsman Cyril Colnik. A form of medieval German timber construction can be seen in the third floor gables and dormers, and some of the projecting brackets feature interesting hand carved heads. Architects Finkler & Liebert were very much in tune with 1890s design trends in Germany where the well-to-do delighted in constructing mansions based on the rustic dwellings and hunting lodges built in the 15th and 16th centuries. Family lore indicates that Trostel actually preferred another design for his house, but that Finkler, his brother-in-law, talked him into this showier German scheme. The house was the first to be built at this end of Terrace Avenue and has always been thought of as one of Milwaukee's most quintessentially German houses. There is nothing else quite like it.

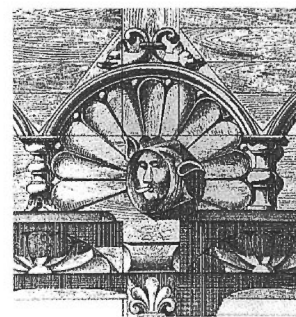


Gustav's father, Albert Trostel, was a native of Wurtemberg, Germany, who opened his first tannery in Milwaukee in 1858. Large tannery complexes owned by German families lined the Milwaukee River north of Pleasant Street near John Kerns' Eagle Flour Mills. Kern's German Renaissance style house at 2569 N. Wahl Avenue is described elsewhere in this booklet. Gustav took over the family tannery in 1907. He lived in this house until his death in 1936 at the age of 71. His widow, Anna, lived on here until her death in 1944. The house has since been converted to a duplex. The Trostel House is in the City of Milwaukee's North Point North Historic District. ♦



The sunburst or shell motif set within a triangle has its roots in traditional German architecture. This example, The Halberstadt House, dates from the 16th century.

Courtesy of Milwaukee Public Library



Finkler owned a series of books on German Renaissance Revival design which may have influenced his work. This motif, from one of his books, comes from a house in Braunschweig and may have inspired the carved heads on the Trostel house.

Courtesy of Milwaukee Public Library

Charles D. Crane House

2608 N. Lake Drive

Year Built: 1903

Architect: Charles D. Crane



This house is a rare example of a German Renaissance Revival style house built by an architect as his own residence. Charles D. Crane was a partner with Carl Barkhausen in a firm that specialized in designing houses in German styles for wealthy German-Americans. Although Crane was not of German descent and had already dissolved his business ties with Barkhausen when this house was built, it nevertheless pays homage to the type of building that had made the firm locally famous and highly successful. Located on a corner lot in a prestigious neighborhood, this house is constructed of rare rose colored Prentice quarry stone laid in alternating courses of wide and narrow bands. The otherwise symmetrical house is given a more picturesque character by the German style stepped gable, which is the simplest of those featured in this guidebook. The curved-roof front porch, which seems somewhat out of character with the house, was added in 1924.

Charles D. Crane was born in Johnson's Creek, New York into an old pioneer family that moved to Wisconsin in 1853. In 1874 Crane began work for prominent Milwaukee architect E. T. Mix, and later went into partnership with Carl Barkhausen from 1888 to 1899. There are several examples of their German Renaissance Revival work in this booklet. This house was one of a series that Crane would



build and live in briefly before selling at a profit. Crane apparently supplemented his income as an architect by this small scale real estate speculation. Crane lived here only through 1904 before selling the house to Frederick Palmer Rugee, the son of successful German immigrant entrepreneur John Rugee. Frederick Rugee served as the secretary and treasurer of the Nordberg Manufacturing Co. and was also a contractor whose swinging bridge at Port Huron, Michigan won special recognition. Rugee purchased this house after the death of his first wife and lived here through 1917. The Crane House is in the City of Milwaukee's North Point North Historic District. ♦



The design of the Crane house is based on such step-gabled, stone fronted buildings as the Borluut house in Ghent dating to c.1175.

Courtesy of Milwaukee Public Library

NORTH SIDE HOUSES

Hubert Riesen Houses 2558 N. 1st Street

Year Built: 1903

Architect: Uehling & Linde



2546-48 N. 1st Street

Year Built: 1906

Architect: H. Messmer & Son



The 2500 block of N. 1st St. was something of a gold coast for those of German ethnicity living on the north side. The large brick houses set on spacious lots bespoke of the financial success attained by the residents, while their ethnic pride was expressed in architectural motifs borrowed from contemporary German design.

The stone-trimmed shaped gables of Nos. 2546-2548 and 2558 are these houses' most eye-catching elements. Historically, in northern Europe, these gables were characteristic of the late medieval and early Renaissance eras. Late 19th and early 20th century German architects revived their use in their efforts to synthesize a distinctive German architectural style. German-American architects and their patrons who were of German ethnicity were anxious to emulate architectural trends in the old country by building houses like these that somewhat resembled new houses being built in Germany. No. 2558 was built at a cost of \$3,500 in 1903 and designed by the firm of Uehling and Linde, while No. 2546-2548 was built at a cost of \$7,000 in 1906 and designed by the firm of H. Messmer & Son. Gothic detail has been incorporated into both buildings in the form of polygonal porch columns, drip mouldings above some of the windows and half-timbering in the gable ends. Both houses were built for mason contractor Hubert Riesen. Interestingly, Riesen was also the contractor for No. 2550, built in 1906 and designed by Leiser & Holst. No. 2550 with its rounded gable, scrolled ornamental brackets, delicate leaded glass, strapwork, lack of half-timbering, and small porch makes a good comparison with its similar looking neighbors since it is inspired by English Jacobean architecture rather than by German forms.

Hubert Riesen was a native Milwaukeean, the son of Holland-born Rudolph Riesen and German-born Emilie Hauck. Hubert Riesen began working for his contractor father around 1888 and later went into partnership with Bernard Wilke as Riesen and Wilke. Hubert's sons, Lawrence and Harley, also worked in the contracting business as the Riesen Bros. The Riesen name is associated with dozens of buildings in Milwaukee. Hubert Riesen lived in No. 2558 from 1903 to 1905 and then moved to the duplex at No. 2546 where he lived until 1912. He used his home as his business office as well. Living in the other flat at No. 2546 was the family of bookkeeper Otto Bausenbach. Isaac Zien, vice-president and treasurer of Zien Bros. Wines and Liquors, bought No. 2558 from Riesen and lived there from 1906 through 1918. Riesen moved to Grant Blvd. in 1914 and later to N. Humboldt Ave. before retiring to Florida in 1938. He returned to Milwaukee in 1946 and died at the age of 77 on Feb. 19, 1947. The Riesen Houses are part of the North First Street National Register Historic District. ♦

Edward Schuster House 2576 N. 1st Street

Year Built: 1901

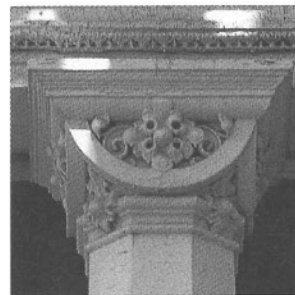
Architect: John Roth



Anchoring this block of fine homes is one of the most impressive of the German style houses on the city's north side. The Schuster House is a visual feast of carefully and artfully executed details. One of the distinguishing features of this sturdy masonry house is the handsome front porch with its multi-sided columns topped by medieval style cushion capitals with carved floral motifs. The porch ceiling is one of the most elaborate in the city and is beautifully paneled with an ornamental ceiling medallion for the porch light. German design inspiration is evident in the complex double gambrel roof on the north side as well as in the combination of a gambrel-roofed dormer and towerlike bay that extends through the attic story to terminate in a conical roof on the front facade. German style half-timbering in the gables accents the recessed windows, which are enframed by columns and topped by curved pediments with carved floral ornament.

Merchant Edward Schuster was 70 years of age when he commissioned this, his final house, in 1901. It remains a fitting architectural tribute to a man who established one of the city's most successful department stores. Schuster was born in Driburg, Westphalia, Germany in 1831. He first emigrated to the U.S. in 1854 but left New York State to settle in South Africa and then Australia before returning to Germany. He eventually returned to the U.S. in 1883, settling in Milwaukee and establishing the Edward

Schuster & Co. department store with his future son-in-law, Albert T. Friedmann. The main store and offices were located only a few blocks away from this house at the corner of King Dr. and Garfield St. Friedmann and his sons ran the company after Schuster's death, and a number of branch stores were opened. The business was eventually merged with the Gimbel's Department Store chain in 1961.



Edward Schuster died in 1904, a few years after the house was finished, and his widow, Bertha, and their son, Bruno L., a physician, stayed on here through 1906. Solomon Fein became the house's second owner; he operated a wholesale clothing store, S. Fein & Bros., located in the 1000 block of N. Water

St. He lived here through 1911. One of Wisconsin's political giants, Victor Berger, owned the house from 1913 through 1929. Berger left a teaching position to embark on a political career that led to his establishing the Social Democratic Party and making Socialism a national political force. Berger inspired a whole generation of reform-minded Milwaukee Socialists whose legacy was a tradition of well-run, honest government. Berger's German origins and his outspoken pacifism during World War I led to his arrest by the Federal government under the Espionage Act in 1918. Although elected as the first Socialist to Congress, Berger was refused his seat by the House of Representatives due to his indictment. The charges were eventually dropped, and Berger did serve in the House from 1923 to 1929. Berger's wife, Meta, was also active in politics, education and women's suffrage. Berger was killed in an accident in 1929 and Meta moved to Prospect Ave. The Schuster House is part of the North First Street National Register Historic District. ♦

WEST SIDE HOUSES

Abraham Breslauer House 1435 W. Kilbourn Avenue

Year Built: 1891

Architect: Edward V. Koch & Co.



These two residences were built and occupied by members of the same family and typify the tendency of German-American family members to live in close proximity to one another. The property at 1425 was built for 60-year-old Abraham Breslauer (1832-1915), a German born Jewish clothing merchant who came to the U.S. as a young man. Although not much of his work survives, architect Edward V. Koch is known for his

distinctive-looking residences. His work here reflects the German influence on the Queen Anne style with its heavy masonry treatment, extensive use of stone, recessed porch, and ornamental iron balustrade. The niche-like frame around the small, center, second story window and the grouping of windows below two arches in the front dormer are unusually decorative. Particularly noteworthy is the large 3-story corner tower whose uppermost level projects slightly over those below, giving the tower a particularly massive and top-heavy appearance. This feature is borrowed from the traditional late medieval and early Renaissance architecture of Germany and probably reminded Breslauer of the castles of his homeland.

The double house next door at No. 1425 was built six years later by Breslauer's Milwaukee-born son Joseph (1858-1913) and shows that even prosperous individuals constructed 2-family houses to earn extra income or to house extended family members. Here the symmetrical German Renaissance Revival style facade is embellished by two shaped gables trimmed with terra cotta and topped by plaques which feature heraldic shields and scrolls. The unusual bull's-eye like finials and the small dormers with

Joseph Breslauer Doublehouse 1425 W. Kilbourn Avenue

Year Built: 1897

Architect: Crane & Barkhausen



steeply pitched roofs are features architects Crane & Barkhausen often used in their projects.

After completing his education, Joseph Breslauer went to work at his father's clothing store, and then in 1883 the two started a new wholesale wine and liquor business, which eventually located on Broadway in the Third Ward. Joseph died unexpectedly in 1913 at the age of 55, and his

widow, Rose, and his children, Samuel, Clarence, Johanna and Paula, continued to occupy the house through 1917, after which they moved to the East Side. Joseph's father, Abraham, died at the age of 82 in 1915. His children from his second marriage, who were still living at home, then also moved to the East Side. By the end of World War I this once fashionable neighborhood of grand houses and rowhouses was beginning to become congested and commercial. Hawley C. Davis acquired both of the Breslauer houses and converted Abraham's large house to the Hotel Hawley, while Joseph's doublehouse was remodeled into an 8-unit apartment building in 1921. The Breslauer Houses are in the Kilbourn Avenue Row House National Register Historic District. ♦



Captain Frederick Pabst House 2000 W. Wisconsin Avenue

Year Built: 1890-1892

Architect: Ferry & Clas



The crown jewel of Milwaukee's architectural treasures is the Captain Frederick Pabst mansion, the sole Victorian-era beer baron's mansion to survive intact in the city. It is also one of the few reminders of the period when mansions lined Wisconsin Avenue, which was then known as Grand Avenue. The prestigious architectural firm of Ferry & Clas was commissioned to design this costly mansion which popularized the German Renaissance Revival style in Milwaukee. Immediately, other prosperous German-Americans emulated the Pabsts, who were then the leading German family in the city, by constructing a host of other distinctive German-style structures thus helping to give Milwaukee its unique Old World look.

Ferry & Clas looked to the northern European Renaissance and the homes then being built in Germany for the inspiration for this 35-room mansion. The architects lavished considerable attention on the exquisite exterior detailing of the building, which can best be seen in the shaped gables, front porch and porte-cochere. S-scrolls, C-scrolls, floral ornament, strapwork, and scrolled pediments were executed in tan terra cotta to match the color of the brick. The richly detailed domed pavilion at the east end of the building served as the Pabst Brewing Company's pavilion at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago and was shipped back here after the fair and added to the recently completed mansion for use as a summer house. It was later converted into a chapel.

Captain Frederick Pabst (1836-1904) was a native of Nicholasreith, Saxony, Germany, who came to this country as a youth. By the age of 21 he had acquired his captain's papers and was part owner of a Great Lakes steamship. He was known as "Captain" for the rest of his life. Pabst made a career change after marrying brewery heiress Marie Best, and in 1864 became a partner with his father-in-law, Philip Best, in the latter's brewery. Best subsequently retired to a life of leisure in Germany leaving his two sons-in-law in charge of the brewery. Pabst became company president in 1889, and the brewery was later renamed after him. The construction of the \$255,000 mansion was his first big indulgence after assuming control of the company and signaled the beginning of a major expansion of the brewery's interests nationwide.



Pabst died on New Year's Day in 1904, and his wife, Marie, followed him in death in 1906. With his children all settled into mansions of their own, the Wisconsin Avenue property was sold by the family to the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Milwaukee, and from 1908 to 1975 served as the archbishop's residence. When the Archdiocese sold the mansion to a developer who intended to raze it, Wisconsin Heritages was founded to save the building from demolition. Although the matching carriage barn was razed, and the rear yard was sold off, Wisconsin Heritages was successful in acquiring the house itself, and since 1978 has undertaken an ambitious and meticulously authentic restoration. The exquisitely detailed interior is open for daily tours and special events. The Pabst mansion is a City of Milwaukee Locally Designated Historic Structure and is also listed in the National Register of Historic Places. ♦

Robert Machek House 1305 N. 19th Street

Year Remodeled: after 1893

Architect/Designer:
Robert Machek



Reminiscent of the half-timbered rustic cottages and hunting lodges of Germany, Austria and Eastern Europe this Old World jewel box of a house was built by wood carver Robert Machek as a celebration of and public advertisement for his craft. In Europe, Machek was a noted Viennese craftsman who is said to have worked for the Hapsburgs. In 1884, he was awarded the Silver Medal by King Milan I of Serbia for his outstanding work on the Royal Palace at Belgrade. In spite of his apparent success in Eastern Europe, Machek emigrated to this country in the late 1880s and first appeared in Milwaukee in 1890 working as a cabinetmaker and a carpenter.

In March of 1893 Machek purchased the house at the northwest corner of 19th and McKinley Streets from Charles Thurow, who had lived at this location since around 1877. In the years following his purchase, Machek enriched and embellished the small house, transforming it from a modest American Victorian cottage to a fanciful European villa. Highly decorative half-timbering was added to the exterior, and each window opening was transformed into an individual work of art embellished with a variety of pediments, pilasters, brackets and strapwork so that no two are alike. Looking more closely, one can see small whimsical heads peeking out from below the small windows of the front and side gables and from the arches at the front porch. Exuberant carved woodwork is also found on the house's interior. The large, matching,

attached garage to the north was built in 1971, almost doubling the size of the house. The beautiful old wrought iron fence is one of the handsomest in the city.



It is not known whether Machek worked at his craft independently or as an employee of a millwork or furniture-making firm. Apparently dissatisfied with his life in Milwaukee, Machek left his wife, Mary, and his son, Arthur, in 1907 and moved to Denver and later to California, where he died in 1920. His widow died at the house in 1941 followed by her son in 1945. Once surrounded by other Victorian houses, the Machek house alone survived the destruction of its neighborhood by urban renewal in the 1960s. It now stands amid a tract development of 1960s suburban style houses as a tribute to the tireless efforts of the current owners who valiantly saved it from demolition and have lovingly preserved it. The Machek House is a City of Milwaukee Locally Designated Historic Building and is also listed in the National Register of Historic Places. ♦



Machek was familiar with the tradition of half-timbered cottages ornamented with hand-carved detailing such as this 17th Century example from Strassburg.

Courtesy of Milwaukee Public Library

Henry Harnischfeger House

3424 W. Wisconsin Avenue

Year Built: 1905

Architect: Eugene R. Liebert



One of the few grand mansions to survive on W. Wisconsin Ave., the Harnischfeger House near the corner of 35th Street is one of the city's most eye-catching and thoroughly German style dwellings. The building's architect, Eugene Liebert, was born in Berlin and educated in his homeland before emigrating to Milwaukee at the age of 17 in 1883. He went on to produce some of the most flamboyant examples of German Renaissance Revival style architecture in Milwaukee.

The Harnischfeger mansion drew its inspiration from German turn-of-the-century houses, which themselves were modeled after the medieval and early Renaissance buildings that had been built by prosperous merchants in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. The resurgence of interest in these forms reflected the rise of an influential middle and industrial class in Germany in the 1890s as well as the growing nationalism of a unified Germany. It is interesting that the prosperous self-made German-Americans in Milwaukee so closely identified with their counterparts back in their ancestral homeland.

Although the Harnischfeger House exhibits many of the same features seen in other German-influenced Milwaukee houses, architect Liebert has handled them in a bold and dramatic fashion. The front gable is theatrically stepped and features shadowy niches in which are placed squat columns similar to antique examples in Lubeck or Cologne. The bartizan, or corner turret, is particularly original and

sculptural with its cut away lower stage supported by a pair of squat columns. These columns with their cushion-like capitals and the ornamental half-timbering of the twin side gables are elements that look to the German architectural past, while the dramatic arched entry and porte cochere on the east side are among the more forward looking features of German design at the turn-of-the-century. In keeping with the German fondness for figural ornament, two medieval knights bearing shields support the roof of the upper front porch. They are said to be emblematic of the Harnischfeger name, which means "armor polisher" in German. At the time of its construction, the Harnischfeger House was the last word in up-to-the-minute German residential design and would have been perfectly at home in the suburbs of a large German city.



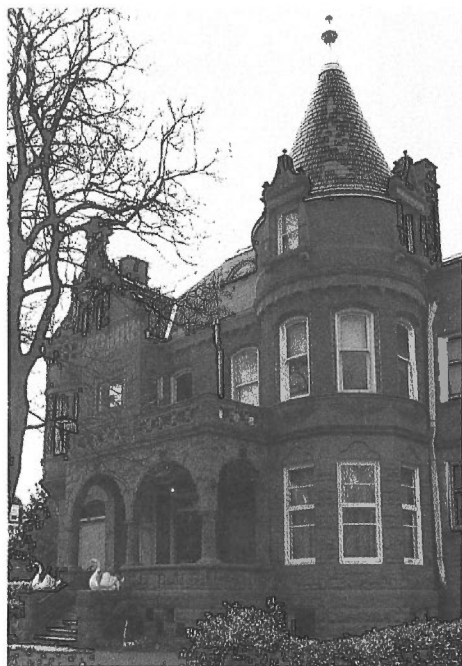
Henry Harnischfeger was born in Salmuenster, Germany in 1855 to a father who worked as a tanner. He emigrated to the U.S. in 1872 and after nearly a decade in New York City working in machinery maintenance and repair, Harnischfeger came to Milwaukee in 1881. Three years later he founded a tool and die company that grew into today's Harnischfeger Corp., one of the largest producers of traveling cranes and excavating machinery in the world.

Harnischfeger built this mansion when he was 50 years old. Although strongly attached to their Teutonic dream house, the Harnischfegers finally moved from it in the 1920s when Wisconsin Avenue was so commercialized it was no longer a fashionable place to live. The Harnischfegers' new, smaller, retirement house on Terrace Avenue in the North Point area was also designed by Eugene Liebert. Harnischfeger died in 1930. The huge old Wisconsin Ave. mansion has since been divided into 15 apartments. The Harnischfeger House is a City of Milwaukee Local Designated Historic Building. ♦

George J. Schuster House 3209 W. Wells Street

Year Built: 1891

Architect: Crane & Barkhausen



With its striking assemblage of towers, turrets, chimneys and porches, the "Red Castle on Wells Street," as it is known, was one of Milwaukee's first houses that attempted to recreate an Old World flavor. Red Ohio sandstone cut into rusticated blocks, red brick, and orange-red terra cotta trim lend the mansion its distinctive color that sets it apart from its neighbors. Shaped gables can be found on the west, south and main elevations complemented by a dramatic tower with a conical roof and by a bartizan, or corner turret, with a cut stone balustrade. The dramatic gable at the front of the main facade features a medallion with the initial "S," for Schuster, the first owner. Lions' heads stare out from the arches of the porch. Architects Crane & Barkhausen maximized the house's picturesque quality by making no two sides look alike.

Like many of his neighbors, George J. Schuster was a second generation German-American, born to German immigrants John J. Schuster and Magdalene Brunner in Adams County, Ohio in 1850. Schuster made his way to Milwaukee in 1872 and opened a Florence Sewing Machine

franchise with partners Robert C. Fitts and Luther MacNeill. Six years later Schuster and Fitts started a wholesale tobacco business. Schuster ran the company alone from 1885 to 1903. He formed Schuster Bros. in 1903 with John Edward Schuster, and the business occupied a



number of locations downtown on N. Water Street, and then on Broadway. George Schuster was married twice: first to Nora L. Devendorf and then to Mary Bloodgood. Schuster lived in his red castle until his death on September 15, 1922. His widow, Mary, moved out soon afterwards, and she died in 1931. The once proud house was divided into six apartments in 1924, but much of the woodwork

and many of the beautiful fireplaces were preserved. The original carriage barn can still be seen at the rear. The Schuster House is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. ♦



Abram Esbenshade House 3119 W. Wells Street

Year Built: 1899

Architect: Crane & Barkhausen



The architectural firm of Crane & Barkhausen enjoyed a considerable following among Milwaukee's German-American community. They specialized in offering their clientele up-to-date, but Americanized, versions of what was then being built in the old country. Both architects came with excellent credentials. Wisconsin-born Barkhausen had received his early technical training in Germany as well as his finish course in architecture in Berlin, so he was intimately familiar with design trends in Europe. The firm's ease at handling variations on the German Renaissance Revival style can be seen in the peculiar Esbenshade House, which is more low to the ground, delicately scaled and lighter in character than the Schuster House a few houses away at No. 3209, which the architects had designed 8 years earlier.

The facade of the low-roofed house is detailed with an interesting shaped gable that is pierced with an oculus or round window and trimmed with terra cotta scrolls and plaques. The rare curved glass windows on the second story above the porch are examples of fine craftsmanship. The shallow, helmet-like roof which tops the corner tower is unique in Milwaukee. Instead of a more typical heavy masonry porch, the architects have substituted a fine wood porch with pairs of posts supporting a copper-clad roof. Its delicate iron balustrades are enlivened by tendrils and scrolls. The gable of the porch features wave-like scalloped trim and carved ornament. The 2-story bay on the east end of the house has a dormer with a whimsical scalloped roof profile.

Abram Esbenshade was a Pennsylvania native born of German immigrant parents. He came to Milwaukee in the late 1870s, where he first worked as a clerk for T. A. Chapman & Co., an early department store, and then as an insurance agent. In 1886 he went into partnership with Frederick Westfahl and Dietrich Homeyer to manufacture filing cabinets. He was involved with the company for the rest of his life, although he also dabbled in real estate and sales.



From 1884 to 1898 Esbenshade lived elsewhere with his in-laws, the Plattos. Following Jacob Platto's death in 1898, Esbenshade commissioned this house, which may have been paid for with his wife's inheritance. The widowed Mary Platto lived with them until her death at the age of 78 in 1901. Esbenshade occupied the new house until his wife Alice's untimely death from cancer in 1907.

Abram then moved into an apartment in a new apartment house he had built that same year at 3200 W. Wisconsin Avenue. His final years were spent in an Arts and Crafts style house around the corner at 737 N. 32nd Street where he died in 1914 at the age of 65. The Esbenshade House is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. ♦



Architects Crane and Barkhausen may have used buildings like this 18th century example in Lübeck as the model for the Esbenshade house's curvaceous gable.

Courtesy of Milwaukee Public Library

Moritz Meissner House

925 N. 29th Street

Year Built: 1897

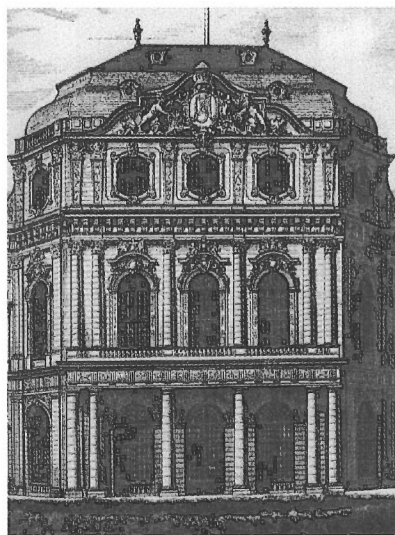
Architect: Eugene Liebert



Not all German-influenced houses in Milwaukee were constructed of brick or stone, as this residence for Moritz Meissner attests. Some were wood frame structures with ornate carved wood trim. Architect Eugene Liebert incorporated Baroque elements into the Meissner House, which include scalloped pediments on the porch, the front dormer, and on the north side bay window and clusters of elegant columns on the porch. Each pediment has an ornamental rondel at its center and each column is embellished with a scrolled capital and festoon. At the turn-of-the-century, the Baroque Revival style revived the elegant curvaceous architecture of 18th century Europe. It was popular in Germany where Eugene Liebert was trained. Liebert cleverly adapted this masonry style of architecture to wood for the design of the unique Meissner house.



who operated a wholesale-retail boot and shoe business, the Garden City Shoe Co., at the time he built this residence. The Meissner family, including wife Hattie and children Florence, Milton, Clarence and Gertrude, lived here through 1903, before moving to an apartment on W. Wisconsin Avenue and later to 1417 N. Cass St. Meissner died in January of 1918 and is buried in Greenwood Cemetery. The Meissner House is located within the Concordia Historic District which has both National Register and Local Historic Designation. ♦



Architect Eugene Liebert may have used buildings like this 18th century palace at Würzburg, Germany as the model for the Meissner house's shaped gable.

Courtesy of Ray Johnson

Moritz Meissner was a German-born Jewish merchant

Ernst Pommer House 3035 W. Kilbourn Avenue

Year Built: 1895

Architect: Schnetzky & Leibert



This remarkable cream brick residence was built by Ernst Pommer, a prosperous German-American who specialized in wholesaling California wines from his shop on what is now N. Plankinton Avenue. Pommer chose a prominent German-American architectural firm to design his imposing new brick mansion in what was then a fashionable neighborhood of prosperous merchants and manufacturers of German descent. Architects Herman P. Schnetzky and Eugene Liebert were both born in Germany and came to this country in early adulthood. During their partnership, from 1891 to 1896, they produced a number of European-inspired residences and commercial buildings. Their best known building is the distinctive, Kaiser-domed Germania Building at 135 W. Wells Street, downtown.

The Pommer House is distinguished by its medallion-like oval windows in the helmet-shaped tower roof and the

unusual sunbonnet front gable that crowns the center of the facade and lends the house an elegant Baroque quality. The porch is beautifully detailed with classical columns and the upper balustrade is of delicate wrought iron, manifesting the German's love of fine ironwork. The interesting thing about the Pommer House is that, unlike most of the houses in this guide, its design is not drawn from the German Renaissance style of the 15th and 16th centuries. The Pommer House was inspired by the German palaces and mansions of the Baroque period in the 18th century and reflects the emphasis on light, lively curving forms typical of that epoch. Architectural historians refer to it as being Baroque Revival in style. The Kalvelage House, not far away at 2432 W. Kilbourn Avenue, is a more costly house in the same style, while the Moritz Meissner house a few blocks away at 925 N. 29th Street is a less expensive wooden Baroque Revival style dwelling.

Prohibition put an end to Pommer's liquor business, and he apparently retired at that time. As Pommer and his wife, Marie, grew older, and as the neighborhood grew less fashionable, the couple moved into a smaller, more conventional-looking retirement house on then prestigious W. Washington Boulevard in 1922. Pommer died about 1928 and Marie in 1935. The Pommer House is located within the Concordia Historic District which has both National Register and Local Historic Designation. ♦



George Koch House 3209 W. Highland Boulevard

Year Built: 1897

Architect: Edward V. Koch



Banker George Koch's Beaux Arts style residence has often been mistaken for a library building. Architect Edward V. Koch based his design on the Neoclassical style country villas of early 19th century Europe. He cleverly gave the small structure a monumental appearance by using grand, over-scaled features including classical balustrades, columns, and a very impressive front entrance. The stone lions at the front steps have led to the building's nickname, the Lion House, and have also contributed to the misconception that it is a public building rather than a house. The unusual one-story-on-a-raised-basement form of the house is reminiscent of Milwaukee's other Lion House on the city's East Side at 1241 N. Franklin Place built for Edward Diederichs 40 years earlier. That house is discussed elsewhere in this booklet. It is interesting that this unusual one-story-with-raised-basement villa type was always built in Milwaukee by those of German ethnicity. At one time there were other houses of this kind, but today the Koch and Diederichs houses are the best surviving examples. In this particular instance, both the owner and the architect may have been influenced by the much admired Diederichs House, although there is no way to know for sure whether that was the case or whether they were directly inspired by European houses.

George Koch was born in Milwaukee in 1863, the son of miller John Koch, who later operated a flour and feed store



at 2044 N. 3rd Street. George Koch began work for the Frankfurth Hardware Co., and then was employed at the Manufacturers Bank. He later worked for the Merchants and Exchange Bank and served as its cashier and then vice-president when the institution reorganized as the West Side Bank.

George Koch married Amelia Millenbach of Detroit in 1896 when he was 33, and a year later had his brother, Edward V. Koch, design this one-of-a-kind residence for them. Koch died at age 57 in 1922, and his widow apparently left Milwaukee soon afterward. The house on Highland Boulevard was subsequently rented. Years later, as Concordia College (now the Indian Community School) expanded north from State Street, the college acquired this building. It kept the Koch House for use as an administration building, perhaps because it looked so much like a public building anyway, but razed its neighbors for a campus expansion that never happened. Concordia College has since moved to the suburbs. The abandoned house was vandalized and later suffered a devastating fire in the 1980s that gutted its interior. It has since been restored on the exterior to its original appearance and rehabilitated on the interior for office use. The Koch House is a City of Milwaukee Locally Designated Historic Structure and is also part of the Highland Boulevard National Register Historic District. ♦



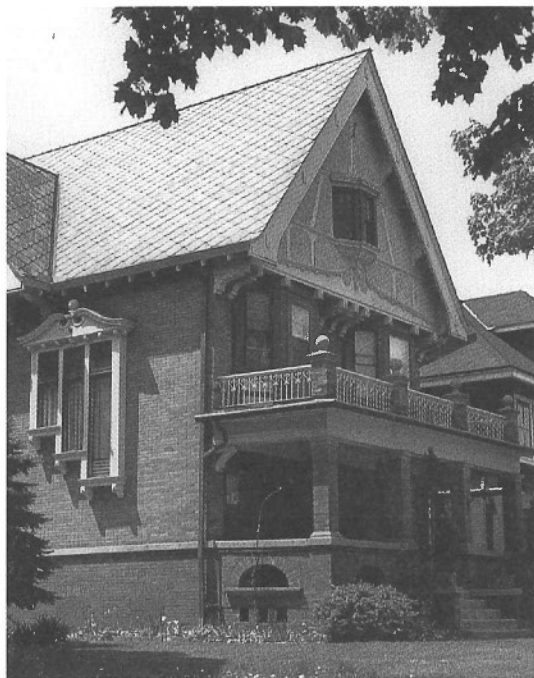
The design of the George Koch house may have been inspired by Milwaukee's other "Lion House", the Edward Diederich house, depicted here before the second story was added. The Diederich house is featured elsewhere in this booklet.

Courtesy of Milwaukee Public Library

Fred Lichtfeldt House 2923 W. McKinley Boulevard

Year Built: 1907

Architect: P. M. Christiansen



Once the site of the 60-acre Cold Spring Park race track, later used as a Civil War encampment known as Camp Washburn, and for years the site of the annual Wisconsin State Fair, McKinley Boulevard was laid out as the focal point of a residential subdivision that was platted in the late 1890s. Drawn by the prestigious boulevard address, many upper middle-class German-Americans came to settle in the neighborhood and built houses that can be described as having a vaguely Teutonic character. These houses were often built of brick and usually had their lofty gable ends, which sometimes incorporated half-timbering, fronting the street. They also had impressive masonry porches with heavy piers. Taken as a whole, the houses have an overall heaviness of scale and loftiness typical of the houses being built in Germany at the turn-of-the-century.

The Fred Lichtfeldt house is a particularly interesting example. The dramatic gable end is ornamented with curving half-timbering which frames an unusual oriel



window to create a sort of story-book appearance. This gable with its whimsical Hansel and Gretel treatment, lends a cottagey, Teutonic character to this otherwise massive house. Attention to detail extends to the east elevation where the unusual stepped staircase windows are capped by a pediment.

Fred Lichtfeldt belonged to an industrious family whose members were active in the iron and wire works business. Altogether the family ran four such companies. Fred headed up the Standard Iron and Wire

Works located at today's 1511 N. 12th Street. Fred, his wife, Amalia, and children, Clarence A. and Pearl, lived in this house through 1926. The Lichtfeldt house was later converted into a duplex.

Other noteworthy houses of this German type on McKinley Boulevard include No. 2801, the Fred Leypoldt House (1905); No. 2902, the Charles H. Mueller House (1906); No. 3003, the Frederick Westfahl House (1903-04); and No. 3120, the Richard Buchholz House (1905). The Lichtfeldt House is located within the McKinley Boulevard National Register Historic District and also the City of Milwaukee's Cold Spring Park Historic District. ♦



In Germany, half-timbering evolved into a veritable art form as this example from Schwarzwald, built in 1708, illustrates. Often pictured in architectural publications at the turn-of-the-century, such buildings inspired Milwaukee's architects to add whimsical touches to their gables.

Courtesy of Milwaukee Public Library

Albert Rottman-Henry Dapper Duplex 3902-3904 W. Roberts Street

Year Built: 1909

Architect: Leiser and Holst



The substantial residence at the corner of North 39th and Roberts Streets was one of the last German Renaissance Revival style houses to be built in Milwaukee. The massive masonry porch with its heavy stone-clad piers, the stone-trimmed shaped gable on the front and the corner tower with its bell-shaped domed roof and stone-trimmed panels are all characteristic elements of the German Renaissance Revival style. The duplex's corner location and large scale have long made it the most prominent building on its block. Milwaukee architects Julius Leiser and Charles J. F. Holst, who were in partnership from 1903 to 1924, were known for designing austere, massive houses, apartment buildings and churches that looked like they were meant to last for the ages.

The two owners of this handsome building were joined by business ties and, perhaps, by family relationships. Both were sons of German immigrants. Albert Rottman was born in 1874 in Fond Du Lac, Wisconsin to a family that relocated to Milwaukee in the 1880s. Rottman followed in his father's footsteps and took up the shoemaking trade in the early 1890s before opening a shoe store with his brother William in 1898. After William left the business, Rottman took Henry Dapper as his partner in 1903. Dapper had worked as a shoe salesman with another firm before joining Rottman. Dapper and Rottman remained partners for the

rest of their business careers, and their shoe store was eventually located downtown at 314 W. Wells St. The two men and their families first began sharing a duplex in 1906. They built this handsome German Renaissance Revival style duplex three years later in what was then a fashionable new neighborhood across from Washington Park. Each family had a separate flat that filled an entire floor of the building, while they shared the extra rooms in the attic.

Changing fashion led Rottman and Dapper to build and occupy a new duplex in 1916 at 2319 N. Sherman Blvd. which was also designed by Leiser & Holst, but this time in the more up-to-date Prairie style. Their old house on Roberts St. was subsequently occupied by a variety of short-term occupants. Rottman and Dapper closed their shoe store and retired after World War II. Rottman died at the age of 76 in 1947. His widow, Hattie, and son, Gilbert, stayed in the Sherman Blvd. duplex until Hattie's death in 1957. The Dappers finally moved to their own home in Milwaukee County in the mid-1950s, after having lived for nearly half a century in the same house with the Rottmanns. Henry Dapper died in 1965. ♦



Joseph B. Kalvelage House 2432 W. Kilbourn Avenue

Year Built: 1896

Architect: Otto Strack



Half hidden among overgrown shrubbery and trees on Kilbourn Avenue is one of Milwaukee's best kept secrets. The Kalvelage House or "Schloss," as it is popularly called, appears as if it was transported whole from Europe. It is unique in the city. German-born architect Otto Strack used 18th century German Baroque palaces as his inspiration for this mansion. The symmetrical facade is a masterpiece of elaborate terra cotta trim and iron work. The ornate mansion is one of the finest German Baroque revival style houses in the United States, perhaps even the finest.

Faces peek out from the leafy trim above the first story arched windows. Heads crown the foliated keystones at the center of the upper story windows. The most wonderful feature of the house is the porch with its eight life-sized Atlantes, or half-male figures, of molded terra cotta which grow out of tapered pilasters. These closely resemble the similar figures on the famous 18th century Zwinger Palace in Dresden, Germany, one of the most famous Baroque buildings in the world, which Strack would have been familiar with from his education in Germany. Also patterned on the Zwinger is the large arched window which crowns the facade and the regal-looking molded head which is located below the shaped gable with its S and C scrolls of terra cotta. The arched window in the



gable, now filled with glass block, once illuminated the top floor ballroom. The intricately detailed iron railings of the porch, terrace and balcony incorporate leaves, tendrils, vines and grotesque heads and were produced by the city's consummate iron craftsman, Cyril Colnik.

Joseph B. Kalvelage was born in New York City in 1850, the son of German immigrants John B. and Anna Kalvelage. By the mid-1850s the family had settled in Milwaukee, and

John went into partnership with Francis Trenkamp to manufacture soap. Joseph succeeded his father in the business and married Dorothea Hoffmann in the late 1870s. In 1882 Kalvelage became the treasurer and, later, secretary-treasurer of his father-in-law's company, the Hoffmann and Billings Manufacturing Co., a business which manufactured brass and iron goods, steam heating supplies, and, later, plumbing fixtures. Like many men of his time, Kalvelage built this house as he approached middle age as a monument to his success. Proud of his German descent, Kalvelage had his German-trained architect design a house that would have been admired even in Germany at the time.

The Kalvelages finished raising their family in this house, but, not long after his wife's death at the age of 60 in 1918, Joseph, who was then in his late 60's and living alone, moved to more manageable quarters, an apartment. His business closed during the Great Depression, and Kalvelage died at the age of 91 in 1943.

After Kalvelage sold his house, it had a colorful history. It was subsequently occupied by the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s and then used as the Roger Williams Hospital. It later became a rooming house, but is now again maintained as a single family residence. The interior still features beautiful woodwork, richly carved fireplaces and a grand staircase. The Kalvelage House is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. ♦

SOUTH SIDE HOUSES

Dr. Urban A. Schlueter House 1615 S. Layton Boulevard

Year Built: 1923

Architect: Walter Truettner



Although grand German Renaissance Revival and Baroque style houses were no longer being built in Milwaukee after about 1907, a more generalized, romanticized form of Old World cottage architecture remained popular with the middleclass into the 1920s. Inspired by rustic German cottages, as idealized in storybook illustrations, greeting cards, and picture postcards, houses such as the Schlueter residence epitomized the quest for cozy domestic charm by early 20th century German-American homeowners. The steeply pitched, red tile-clad roof punctuated by twin stuccoed dormers is the building's most noticeable feature, concealing a full second story and accenting the house's cottage-like character. A polygonal bay with half-timbering and casement windows wraps around the north corner of the house. A narrow band of stucco separates the eaves from the front brick wall where four windows are grouped together below a narrow drip moulding. The stone-trimmed, round-headed entry is framed with narrow brick

walls accented with pieces of stone and topped by bulbous balusters that support a distinctive tile-clad hood. The whole effect of the house is that of a picturesque Hansel & Gretel cottage of the type that might be found in an Eastern European village or used as a stage backdrop for a German opera.

Builder-designer Walter Truettner, who called himself "The Bungalow Man," was known for his unusual bungalows and one-of-a-kind cozy residences that are evocative of European cottages. Truettner did some of the design work on his houses, but in the early 1920s also employed Ray C. Dieterich as architect. The Schlueter House may reflect Dieterich's influence.

Urban A. Schlueter was a physician and surgeon who first appears in the Milwaukee city directory in 1915. He had offices at 26th and National and then at 27th and National where he lived above his offices. Schlueter formed a brief one-year partnership with Dr. E. Benjamin Taylor in 1922 and had an office downtown in addition to his office on National Ave. He also served as the physician for Milwaukee's Police Department. Schlueter later went into a group practice with Dr. Earl Baum, his next door neighbor at 1603 S. Layton Blvd. With other physicians, they ran the Industrial Clinic at 408 E. Greenfield Ave.

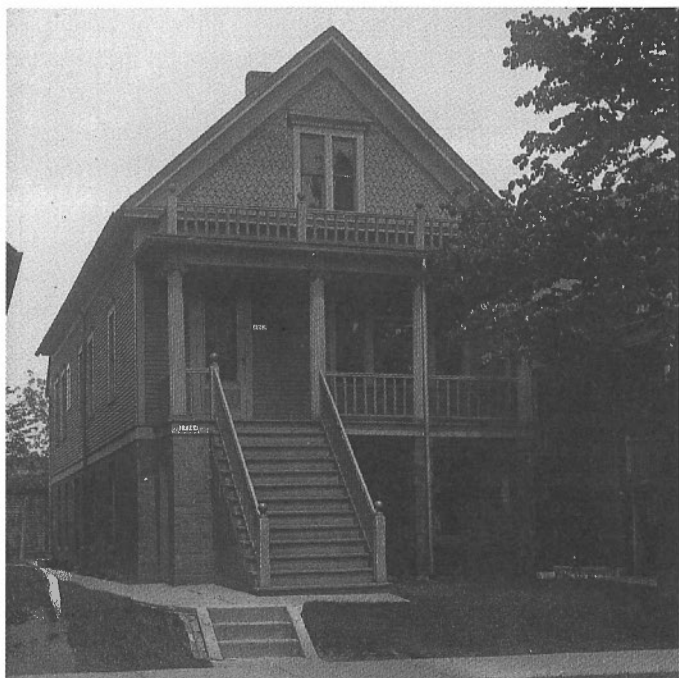
Schlueter and his wife, Josephine, and son Francis moved into their Layton Boulevard home in 1923 and lived there through 1943 when they moved to suburban Greenfield. Schlueter retired from the clinic in 1950. The Schlueter House is part of the Layton Boulevard National Register Historic District. ♦



Romanticized cottages that were vaguely suggestive of earlier historic periods were popular in Germany at the turn-of-the-century as this example from Munich, built in 1912, illustrates.

Courtesy of Milwaukee Public Library

The Polish Flat



A Polish flat at 1714 West Windlake Avenue showing the characteristically tall basement story and steep front steps.

Courtesy of UW-Milwaukee archives, Kwasniewski Collection.

Polish Flat is a term used to describe a unique architectural manifestation of immigrant culture in Milwaukee. Polish Flats, as their name indicates, were built almost exclusively by immigrant Poles in their neighborhoods on the South Side, in the Riverwest area, and just north of Brady Street on the lower east side. Some were also built by families with German surnames who lived among the Poles. These people may, in fact, have been of Polish ancestry or else may have lived among the Poles in the German-held Polish territories in Europe.

Home ownership was a cultural imperative to the Poles, and, as soon as economically possible after their arrival in Milwaukee, it was customary for them to purchase, build, or move to a vacant lot a small, one-story or story-and-a-half frame cottage. These cottages were the typical, mass-produced workers' cottages of the period and featured modest Victorian Gothic or Queen Anne details on the front. They were generally front-gabled structures and were often originally built on cedar post foundations. As families expanded, newly-arrived relatives needed a place to stay,

or the family just needed some rental income, the Poles would lift up their existing wooden house in its entirety and build under it an above ground or partially sunken basement apartment out of wood, brick or concrete block. These walk-in basement apartments had street level windows and their own door to the outside, usually on the front of the house under the stoop to the upper unit, but



This Polish Flat at 2059 South 12th Street had the ornamental gingerbread detail that was popular in the 1890's.

Courtesy of UW-Milwaukee Archives, Kwasniewski Collection.

sometimes at the side of the house. Steep wooden steps would then be built up to a small wooden porch at the entrance to the upper unit.

The Poles had a strong attachment to their residences, neighborhoods and churches and preferred to stay and rebuild or remodel rather than move to a different house. The economically-built and structurally-simple cottages lent themselves to home improvement projects that could be undertaken as the need arose and money became available. Building permit records confirm that porches, windows, kitchens and bathrooms, as well as other exterior and interior features, were frequently modified as a way of keeping up with the times. Sadly for us today, however, such home improvements have resulted in the loss of much of the original historic architectural detailing on the exteriors of most of the modest houses in Polish neighborhoods, with the result that there are very few Polish Flats that look like they originally did. ♦

Jahnke House

1942-1944 South 24th Street

Year Built: c. 1890,

Architect/Builder: unknown

moved to this site 1911-1913



The saga of this south side property in many ways typifies the history of the Polish flat in Milwaukee. The first owner to construct a house on this site was Andrew Andris, a carpenter and wood turner, who erected a small frame cottage at the rear of the lot in 1891. He probably built here because another family member, Joseph Andris, had just built two cottages next door at No. 2940 in 1890. The Andris family was of German ethnicity but probably had ties to the Polish community through marriage or residency in the old country. Andrew Andris started a confectionery business in 1895 and went to live above his shop, first on S. 20th St., then on S. 16th St. He rented out the rear cottage on S. 24th St. for a while, but by 1902 he had sold it to Curlita Edson, who also used it as a rental. Edson was a cut stone contractor. Julius Jahnke moved to the cottage in 1906. He was also of German ethnicity and worked as a teamster. Between 1911 and 1913 he apparently moved

the present cottage to the front part of his lot from a site somewhere else in the city and built a tall basement below it of concrete block, giving it the characteristic Polish flat appearance. The cottage itself, with its three-part windows and spindlework detail at the porch exhibits the influence of the Queen Anne style that was in vogue when the house was most likely built in the 1880s or 1890s. When cottages like these outlived their usefulness at one site, they were eagerly sought after by thrifty area residents, such as Julius Jahnke, who moved them to new sites and used them as rental property or even grafted them onto existing cottages as additions. Jahnke never lived in the new cottage, but instead used it as a 2-unit rental and continued to live in the tiny rear cottage with his wife, Amalia, son Julius, Jr. and his cousin Otto. The family moved to 1619 S. 20th St. in 1922. Otto and his wife, Mary, moved back to S. 24th St. for a brief time in the mid-1920s but then rejoined the senior Jahnkes. Julius Jahnke died at 59 years of age in 1931. ♦



The Michalski Family House

2449 South 14th Street

Year Built: 1907

Architect: unknown



Milwaukee tax rolls show that this simple, but well-preserved, example of a Polish flat was built in 1907. Physical evidence suggests that the other houses on this block once resembled No. 2449 and were probably built by the same contractor. The installation of vinyl and aluminum siding and alterations to the windows, doors and porches have now obscured their original appearance. The Michalski House's clapboard

siding, shingled gable end, columned porch and 3-part parlor window show the house was built during the transition from the Queen Anne to the Colonial Revival style and illustrates that even modest workers' cottages reflected the architectural design trends of their era. This Polish flat was built with a raised basement as part of the original design. The house is unusual in that it has a wood basement wall, rather than brick or concrete block, with the clapboarding extending down the side walls right to the ground level.

This modest cottage was first occupied by the Michalski family whose members included Rose, Andrew, Anton, Mary and Stanley. Rose, the matriarch of the family, was a 57-year-old widow when she moved to this house from South 7th Street. Stanley, her 38-year-old son, lived with his mother and remained single all his life. He worked for the Chicago and North Western Railway. Andrew was 27 years of age and worked at various occupations ranging from a machinist to a blacksmith. He eventually moved next door to No. 2445. Anton worked as a stove monitor and mechanic, while Mary worked as a dressmaker. The lower flat may have always been used as a rental unit. Like many hard-working blue collar families on the south side, the Michalskis supplemented their earnings by raising chickens in the backyard, for which they built a large chicken coop in 1923. Anton moved away around 1923, as did Mary the following year. Rose and her son Stanley continued to occupy this house until the mid-1930s when they moved in next door with Anton. Stanley died in 1935 at the age of 65, and his mother, Rose, died in 1938 at the age of 88. The city's building permit records indicate that Michalski descendants used this Polish flat as income property into the 1980s. ♦

Domagalski Family House

2074 South 13th Street

Year Built: 1900

Builder: Joseph Tucholka

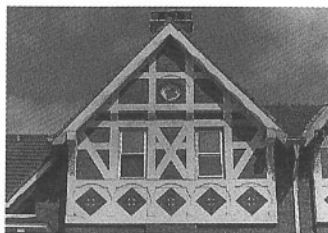


Polish Flats can occasionally be found built of brick as this fine example illustrates. Here the owners incorporated the raised basement as an original feature of their new residence rather than add it at a later time, as was commonly done. This indicates that the family enjoyed a certain degree of prosperity yet conformed with prevailing neighborhood building types by constructing a Polish Flat rather than a

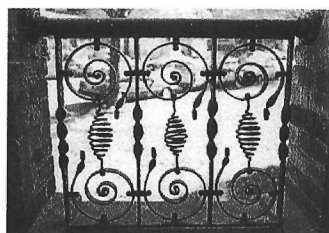
standard duplex. Like its frame neighbors, the house is sited with its gable end to the street and features a three-part parlor window and a steep stairway up to the main entrance. Although now discolored from exposure to decades of air pollution, the locally manufactured brick was once a bright, creamy yellow. South 13th St. was a relatively important thoroughfare on the city's south side, and its status is reflected in the many brick residences and commercial buildings found in the vicinity.

The Domagalski family built this Polish flat in 1900 at a cost of \$2,000 to replace an earlier dwelling on the site which the family had occupied since it first came to Milwaukee from Poland in 1882. As was common in the Polish community, the house passed to various family members who lived in it until the late 1930s. Polish-born Jacob Domagalski, a laborer, was the family patriarch. Living under the same roof was his son John, John's wife Barbara, and their children, Helen and Max. Also in the house were Frank and Victor, probably John's other sons. John at first worked as a laborer and tanner and then moved his family two blocks east in 1909 to open his own grocery store. Victor stayed on in this house, and his family grew to include his wife, Mary, and his children, Dolores, Prosper and Eleanore. He worked for many years as a foreman at the Netz Glove and Mitten Co. After Victor's untimely death at the age of 36 in 1919, his family remained in the house through 1937 and then moved to South 12th Street. While the basement flat may at first have housed extended family members, by the 1920s it was rented out. ♦

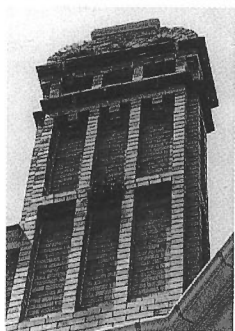
One of the most outstanding characteristics of Milwaukee's ethnic architecture is the beautifully crafted ornament of stone, wood, iron, terra cotta and brick that was produced by talented local artisans to decorate these European influenced houses. A few of the hundreds of examples are featured below.



Henry Harnischfeger House



Abraham Breslauer House



Ernst Pommer House



Gustav Trostel House



Joseph Kalvelage House



Frederick Weinhagen House



Robert Machek House



Captain Frederick Pabst House

Brochures in this series include:

- *Ethnic Commercial and Public Buildings Tour*
- *Ethnic Church Tour*
- *Ethnic Houses Tour*

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